

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**TRANS-SAHARA COUNTERTERRORISM INITIATIVE:
BALANCE OF POWER?**

by

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 30 MAR 2007		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2006 to 00-00-2007	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative Balance of Power?			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Mary Choate			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5050			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT See attached.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 20	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Mary Jo Choate
TITLE: Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative: Balance of Power?
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 30 March 2007 WORD COUNT: 5,260 PAGES: 20
KEY TERMS: Africa, Sahel, Maghreb, Terrorism, Interagency, EUCOM
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Current U.S. counterterrorism endeavors in support of the national security strategy include programs on every continent of the globe. Complementary interagency initiatives enable the United States to exercise all instruments of national power to influence strategic objectives. As Africa has become more important to the world economy, solutions to Africa's economic, political and health challenges have increasingly been sought in concert with the world community, based on a mutual and growing desire for regional stability in Africa. Several U.S.-sponsored counterterrorism programs in Africa provide bilateral and multinational training opportunities with an array of nations spanning the continent. One such program, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative, was created in 2005 as a five-year, \$500 million endeavor with nine nations in Western Africa: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, and Chad. Touted as a program that is as much a non-military development assistance initiative as it is a military-to-military training initiative, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative seems to complement the diplomatic, economic, law enforcement and informational programs concurrently being administered by the U.S. in Africa, but is the balance of (national) power right?

TRANS-SAHARA COUNTERTERRORISM INITIATIVE: BALANCE OF POWER?

Before Sept.11, 2001, most Americans paid little attention to terrorism, particularly in the Third World. Since then, though the Middle East and Central Asia have figured most prominently in the war on terrorism, Africa is increasingly coming into focus as an important battleground.¹

—Ambassador David H. Shinn

For the past five years, operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have dominated the news headlines in the United States, overshadowing many other foreign endeavors in pursuit of national strategic policy. Inundated with these headlines, the average American citizen would likely be surprised to learn the extent of U.S. military, diplomatic and economic involvement in Africa. This paper examines one small slice of American involvement in Africa, that of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI). How does the TSCTI fit into the United States' national security strategy, how does it impact regional relations with Africa, and is it hitting the targets it is truly aiming at?

The following pages will analyze this initiative through the spectrum of all elements of America's national power – Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement, or “DIMEFIL.”

Africa is an enormous and enormously complex continent comprised of 53 nations with a vast array of cultures.² It is a landscape of many extremes: incredible natural resources, particularly energy, minerals, and precious gems; almost unimaginable poverty; catastrophic disease and famine; extensive institutional corruption; ungoverned spaces and fledgling democracies. Inequitable distribution of wealth generated by the riches of the continent perpetuates a stark contrast between the “haves” and the “have nots.” Failed and failing states contrast sharply with neighbors that are increasingly modern and stable. All this considered, it is worth noting that Africa is also a land of emerging strengths, as the vast majority of its nations have only been free from external colonial rule for about 50 years.

The diversity of African nations makes generalizations difficult and very risky, whether in casual conversation or the crafting of policy. A solution to a problem in one country may not be successfully applicable in another country for reasons of culture, history, religious constraints, or economy. One thing can be agreed upon without dispute: Africa has tremendous potential.

What is the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI)?

The TSCTI is a “multi-faceted, multi-year strategy aimed at defeating terrorist organizations by strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhancing and

institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security forces, promoting democratic governance, discrediting terrorist ideology, and reinforcing bilateral military ties with the United States.”³ More specifically, it is a Department of State-led interagency program established in 2005 between the U.S. and nine nations in Africa: Chad, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Nigeria.⁴ In October 2006, plans to add Libya to this program were announced, but as of this writing had not yet been finalized.⁵ The program is planned as a \$500 million investment, in increments of \$100 million per year, if fully funded.⁶ Note that in late 2006, the Department of State changed the name of this program from an “Initiative” to a “Partnership” – the “Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership” – but since most references concerning this program refer to it by its former name, this paper does likewise.

Each of the participating nations shares at least one border with another participating nation. Taken all together, the TSCTI participants cover a significant portion of North and West Africa. When the nations under the TSCTI are mapped in conjunction with the nations participating in several other counter-terrorism programs also initiated by the U.S. in Africa, they collectively span more than two-thirds of the continent – by design.

Trying to map out and keep track of the plethora of programs currently operating in Africa can quickly cause “acronym overload,” particularly as some programs have merged with others or changed names for one reason or another during recent years. The East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EAC-TI) is very similar to TSCTI but partners with nations in the Horn of Africa, and is primarily overseen by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), one of the three Geographic Combatant Commanders who each has a share of the African continent and its islands within their respective areas of operation.

The African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program (ACOTA) was created to fill a gap in African peacekeeping capacity, and provides peace support operations training and non-lethal equipment to 14 nations, including three TSCTI participants (Nigeria, Senegal and Mali). These peacekeepers can be used as part of a United Nations mission, or for operations initiated and led by the African Union or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). During the Clinton Administration, ACOTA was known as the African Crisis Response Initiative. ACOTA is the Africa portion of a larger, global program known as the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), which was modeled after the success of ACOTA, and which exports the peacekeeper training program to other nations around the world.⁷

Since 1983, the Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) Program has synergized federal, state and local civilian law enforcement agencies in a program that provides

training, equipment and technology to countries around the world in order to improve their counterterrorism capabilities. Many of the TSCTI partner countries, as well as other global hotspots such as Colombia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan, have utilized this program, receiving a wide range of training including cyber-terrorism, airport security, hostage negotiation and rescue, crisis management and response, countering terrorist finance, and interdiction of terrorist organizations. The type of training offered is tailored to the partner country's needs and conditions.⁸

To understand the TSCTI as it is being conducted today, it is helpful to review its successful predecessor, known as the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI). The PSI was a military-to-military training program created following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. It helped train and equip at least one company-sized quick-reaction force, about 150 soldiers, in each of four participating nations: Chad, Niger, Mali and Mauritania.⁹ From 2002 to 2004, the Commander, U.S. European Command (EUCOM), the Regional Combatant Commander responsible for the majority of Africa, provided training in small-unit infantry tactics as well as techniques of command and control, all for the modest annual budget of \$7.75 million.¹⁰ Note that although "the military portion of TSCTI is called Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS)"¹¹ the program is more frequently referred to in documents and testimony as TSCTI, a naming convention which is followed throughout this paper.

The success of the PSI, combined with the U.S. Government's desire to employ a wider spectrum of the instruments of American national power in Africa, led to the development of the TSCTI in summer 2005. In addition to expanding the geographic scope from the original four participants to the nine African nations participating today – adding Nigeria, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Senegal – the program also grew from being strictly a military program under the previous construct, to a broader Interagency enterprise led by the U.S. Department of State.¹²

TSCTI, like the PSI before it, offers "direct engagement with participating nations and assists in protecting their borders and exploiting opportunities to detect and deter terrorists by providing basic training and equipment."¹³ Additionally, the TSCTI seeks to "strengthen regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhance and institutionalize cooperation among the region's security forces, promote democratic governance and human rights, and ultimately benefit our worldwide counterterrorism goals and bilateral relationships."¹⁴

The TSCTI is unique among U.S. foreign assistance and counterterrorism programs in that it goes beyond the provision of military training and equipment, to encompass "development assistance, expanded public diplomacy campaigns and other elements as part of an overall counterterrorism strategy."¹⁵

EUCOM has the lead for the military portion of this program. In April 2006, General James L. Jones, USMC, then-EUCOM Commander, testified before the House Armed Services Committee that “the need for TSCTI stems from concern over the expansion of operations of Islamic terrorist organizations in the Sahel region, a region that approximates the size of the United States.”¹⁶

EUCOM bases its regional strategies “on the principle that it is much more cost-effective to prevent conflicts than to stop one once it’s started.”¹⁷ General Jones has repeatedly remarked that “early engagement, often requiring modest investment, can yield significant long-term dividends. In many cases, early actions can minimize or eliminate future engagements.”¹⁸

The intent of the military slice of this program is for American military trainers from either the Army or the Marine Corps to train company-size infantry units in basic marksmanship, planning, communications, land navigation, patrolling, and medical care.¹⁹ The expansion in program scope from four to nine country participants was intended to “foster better information sharing and operational planning between regional states.”²⁰ It builds the “capacity of partner nations to effectively share information to disrupt and attack terrorist networks, as well as to receive, store and act on strategic and operational information to conduct peace and stability operations.”²¹

According to General Jones, this increased capacity for cooperation

strengthens regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhances and institutionalizes cooperation among the region’s security forces, promotes democratic governance, fosters development and education, emphasizes the military’s proper role in supporting democratic ideals and ultimately strengthens our bilateral relationships in the region. It also assists the participating nations in stemming the illegal flow of arms, goods, and people through the region, helps nations better protect their vast borders, and contributes to common security”²²

The TSCTI supports U.S. European Command’s theater security cooperation activities which are “planned and executed for the purpose of shaping the future security environment in ways favorable to U.S. interests.”²³

In 2004, Ambassador David Shinn, who served as a Foreign Service Officer from 1964 to 2000 in numerous postings including Ethiopia and Burkina-Faso, offered an assessment of U.S. counterterrorism programs in East Africa that can still be applied today to programs throughout Africa: “Unfortunately...U.S. counterterrorism policy perspectives and programs in the region do not yet measure up to the threat Islamist fundamentalism and al-Qaida activity jointly pose.”²⁴ Ambassador Shinn gives several reasons for his assertion, namely trends of internal conflict, consequences of geography, a collision of religious differences, endemic corruption, and extreme poverty. Let’s take a closer look at each of these issues.

First, many of the countries in Africa have experienced severe internal conflict, which Ambassador Shinn notes is often supported by neighboring states, “either directly or via dissident groups.”²⁵ This internal conflict creates instability that “prevents most governments in the region from exercising full control over their territory, providing terrorists easy access to weapons.”²⁶ Although the actors causing this pattern of conflict are not necessarily international terrorists, they “engage in terrorist tactics,”²⁷ and some, such as the Algeria-based *Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat* (GSPC) have stated their allegiance to the goals and tactics of al-Qaida.²⁸ In 2004, members of the GSPC fought a gun battle in Chad with troops from Niger and Chad who were supported by U.S. Special Forces soldiers conducting training under the PSI program. When the battle was over, 43 Salafi fighters from several West African nations, including Algeria, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, were dead.²⁹ The events leading up to this gun battle were even more newsworthy. The prior year, this group of militants had captured 32 European tourists traveling across the Sahara and held them hostage for several months. Some of the hostages were set free, with the remaining 14 tourists released only after the German government paid a \$6 million ransom. Following the hostages’ release, the GSPC militants based themselves in northern Mali for about seven months until they were chased eastward by the Chadian, Nigerien and U.S. Special Forces troops, who ultimately caught up with them in Chad, the site of the gun battle.³⁰ According to Ambassador Shinn, activity levels of GSPC and other similar groups “indicate conclusively that the security and intelligence services in all of the countries are underfunded and ill-equipped to counter terrorist tactics by local organizations or international terrorists.”³¹

The geography of the region contributes greatly to its security issues. The sheer magnitude of the size of the Sahel and Mahgreb regions, a largely inhospitable landscape, and governments who are simply not capable of monitoring their tremendously long borders result in porous borders that allow unimpeded movement of people, money and weapons. The GSPC’s ability to survive in the hostile desert environments of southern Algeria and northern Mali is not solely due to self-reliance. It requires “some degree of acquiescence from the local population, but it also requires money. This comes from both the hostage ransom they received and from GSPC links to smuggling.”³² The most lucrative smuggling endeavor in the region is cigarette smuggling. If the impressive logistics applied to cigarette smuggling were applied to food distribution, famine would cease to exist in Africa. Cigarettes from Zerouate in Mauritania are moved to Kidal, Mali. There they are split into smaller lots and taken into Algeria in fast Toyota Land Cruiser pick-ups. “According to one estimate, a pack of Marlboro cigarettes (the main brand in the trans-Saharan trade) sells for 250 CFA francs in Burkina Faso, 650 in Mali, and the

equivalent of 850 in Algeria.”³³ From Algeria, these cigarettes get ferried across the Mediterranean Sea, entering Europe through Italy, and despite the “cuts” added onto the price by the many middlemen involved, they still sell for a price well under the cost of legally-imported Marlboro’s.³⁴

People smuggling is also big business in the Sahel, although since many borders are not controlled or monitored, the lines between smuggling, human trafficking and illegal immigration tend to blur. However, since many of the people being moved through the desert die en route due to truck breakdowns or getting lost and abandoned by their paid escorts, and since the same routes and methods of moving people also being used for moving drugs and weapons, these aspects of fundraising are noteworthy.³⁵

In addition to the challenges of the physical geography, “the region sits on a religious fault line of Christianity, Islam and traditional African beliefs.”³⁶ Eight of the nine TSCTI participants are predominantly Muslim nations. Nigeria cannot be categorized this way due to its population being roughly 50 percent Muslim, 40 percent Christian, and 10 percent indigenous religions.³⁷ However, Nigeria’s enormous population, estimated at 131,859,731 in 2006, means that there are approximately 66 million Muslims in Nigeria alone, a fact of significant consequence when considering the region’s potential attraction or cultivation of Islamic extremism.³⁸ While Sufism has remained strong in the region, and

tends to resist the ideas of Islamic fundamentalists...this traditionally moderate form of Islam has not always been sufficient...to overcome the appeal of fundamentalism, especially when it is backed with funds from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. As a result, nearly all of the international terrorism in the region, as opposed to local groups that use terrorist tactics, has ties to extremist Islamic elements.³⁹

Rampant corruption throughout much of Africa is “another factor that attracts terrorists, allowing them to buy off immigration and local security officials.”⁴⁰ The countries of the Sahel and the Maghreb are some of the poorest in the world. High levels of political alienation and social injustice are not uncommon, and these factors along with poverty are often pointed to as the root cause of terrorism in the region. Not everyone agrees with this premise, however. As President Bush’s National Security Strategy issued in March 2006 states, “Terrorism is not the inevitable by-product of poverty. Many of the September 11 hijackers were from middle-class backgrounds, and many terrorist leaders, like bin Laden, are from privileged upbringings.”⁴¹ Poverty may not be the sole driving factor of terrorism, but it cannot be minimized. Senator Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., has written that “terrorism finds sanctuary in failed or failing states, in unresolved regional conflicts, and in the misery of endemic poverty and despair.”⁴² He went on

to argue that “although poverty and despair do not ‘cause’ terrorism, they provide a fertile environment for it to prosper.”⁴³ Ambassador Shinn agrees heartily, and reiterates that “it is time to accept the important role that poverty plays and put in place long-term measures to deal with it.”⁴⁴

Ambassador Shinn is in agreement with General Jones’ comments noted earlier, that it is much more cost effective to shape the environment up front, and avoid a war, although admittedly it can be very difficult to make wise global spending decisions with limited resources. Ambassador Shinn laments, “If only the U.S. had had the foresight years ago to devote to counterterrorism and economic development the equivalent cost of overthrowing the Taliban and rebuilding a destroyed Afghanistan!”⁴⁵ When the costs of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in Iraq are also considered, the amount is staggering even at this point, and the final costs won’t be tallied for quite some time, perhaps years. Speaking of costs and investments, let’s consider two major avenues for monetary assistance in the region, USAID and the Millennium Challenge Account.

Complementary Economic Programs: USAID and Millennium Challenge

USAID is an independent federal government agency that receives overall foreign policy guidance from the Secretary of State.⁴⁶ According to its Internet home page, USAID “supports long-term and equitable economic growth and advances U.S. foreign policy objectives by supporting economic growth, agriculture and trade; global health; and democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance.”⁴⁷ Currently, USAID has mission offices in four of the TSCTI partner nations: Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco, and Mali. It is pursuing the following specific program objectives in each respective participant nation:

- Senegal: Improving middle school education, improving health care and economic livelihood, and strengthening local governance.
- Nigeria: Strengthening democracy and good governance, improving economic livelihoods, improving social sector service delivery, and fighting HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.
- Morocco: Improving trade and education, and strengthening good governance.
- Mali: Improving communications technology, accelerating economic growth, strengthening agricultural sector growth, strengthening democracy, increasing the quality of basic education, and increasing health services.⁴⁸

Several nations participating in the TSCTI are also participating in the Millennium Challenge program, which aims to reduce poverty through economic growth, but also using the

lens of good governance to leverage positive development and transformation.⁴⁹ The program is administered by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) created in 2004 by President Bush, and potential participants must first apply and be evaluated within a satisfactory range on 16 independent and transparent policy indicators.⁵⁰

- Mali entered a compact with the MCC in November 2006, embarking upon a \$460.8 million program to increase economic growth and reduce poverty. (more details on MCC site)⁵¹
- Morocco and Niger met the MCC's Threshold Status criteria in November 2005 and November 2006, respectively, but to date neither has yet merited investment from the account.⁵²
- Nigeria is a candidate for participation in the Millennium Challenge, but has not yet been granted any funding.⁵³
- Senegal is working towards participation in the Millennium Challenge. It earned MCC's Eligible Status in July 2005, and was awarded a \$6.5 million grant to help develop its compact proposal.⁵⁴

Growing Chinese Influence in Africa - Competition or Collaboration?

As Africa has risen in strategic importance to the U.S., it has also become increasingly important to China. Both nations have a keen interest in the continent's economic markets, minerals, and energy resources, particularly oil and natural gas. Many sources estimate that by 2015, the U.S. will be getting 25 percent of its oil imports from Africa.⁵⁵ China already imports 30 percent of its oil from Africa, and as its burgeoning industrial base pushes it closer to surpassing the U.S. as the largest consumer of oil in the world, the two nations can expect the competition to heat up.⁵⁶

In 2005, the Council on Foreign Relations organized an Independent Task Force on U.S. Policy toward Africa to examine links between U.S. foreign policy and global objectives as both relate to Africa, and it is particularly noteworthy that the Task Force identified four issues "of new and increasing importance in Africa's relation to the United States: energy, competition from China and other countries, terrorism, and the growing impact of Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS)."⁵⁷ All of these issues are interconnected with the conditions that the TSCTI is aiming to improve within Africa.

China's influence in Africa is growing due to a tremendous increase in investments in the economic markets of the continent, as well as advantageous financial agreements such as increased aid and debt cancellation for 31 of the most needy African nations, security

agreements in which China increases the number of peacekeepers it provides to U.N. missions in Africa, promises of increased Chinese tourism in Africa, and the provision of professional training to 10,000 African workers over a three year period. Additionally, thousands of African students and workers receive training each year at Chinese universities.⁵⁸ In 2006, more than 900 Chinese doctors were working in China, and a significant malaria vaccination program was under development in West Africa, where it is desperately needed.⁵⁹ China's economic focus has typically been accompanied by a markedly hands-off approach to political and humanitarian issues. Unlike the U.S., "Chinese policy towards African countries is not guided by demands for good governance, democracy, human rights, or transparency. The only thing China requires is that their partner countries do not recognize Taiwan."⁶⁰

China's trade with Africa has increased exponentially in the past six years, leaping from \$10.2 billion in 2000⁶¹ to \$40 billion in 2005, and continuing its upward climb in 2006. Last year, China's trade with Africa reached \$55.5 billion, enabling China to surpass Great Britain as Africa's "third-largest trading partner after the United States and France."⁶² The mutually supporting relationship between trade and labor are given a boost by the estimated 200,000 Chinese workers in Sudan alone, the majority of whom have had at least three years of military training.⁶³ This is no coincidence, since 50-60 percent of Sudan's oil is exported to China.⁶⁴

Chinese President Hu Jintao has visited Africa three times in the past three years, making multi-nation sweeps to engage key political and economic leaders. In contrast, President Bush has not visited Africa since 2003, although First Lady Laura Bush visited twice during 2006. Despite the President's understandable focus on events in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is not likely that our African partners failed to notice these disparities in demonstrations of personal interest.

According to public diplomacy products of the Jintao administration, China does not seek to impose its political will on its African trading partners, and the unspoken contrast against the United States' well-known ties between aid and democratic-or-similar governance is obvious.

In the past several years, both the United States and China have greatly expanded their respective activities in and with Africa, from economic assistance, trade compacts, humanitarian endeavors, and military-to-military exchanges. The question is whether their activities are on a collision path, since many of their interests overlap. Another question is how – or if – Africa will shape China-U.S. interaction with regard to activities in Africa, particularly as competition increases for oil and natural gas.

Interestingly, China is one of the largest providers of military personnel to U.N. peacekeeping missions in Africa, with 1315 Chinese peacekeepers assigned to these missions as of February 2007.⁶⁵ Of 114 nations contributing military and civilian police personnel to U.N.

operations, China ranks 13th and the U.S. ranks 43rd.⁶⁶ This is an area in which the U.S. and China might be able to partner, within the scope of the TSCTI or other complementary programs within Africa.

The New U.S. Africa Command

In February 2007, the Department of Defense announced that President Bush had approved the creation of a new Geographic Component Command for Africa. Whereas Africa had always been covered by the preexisting Component Commands, it had been parceled out among three different commands: EUCOM, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. Pacific Command. Although Egypt is expected to remain under U.S. Central Command in order to more easily coordinate efforts with fellow Arab nations of the Middle East, many welcomed the news of the formulation of a dedicated Africa Command as a signal of the United States' growing strategic interests in Africa.

Although some media outlets took the news of the new command to mean that the U.S. would be placing renewed, primary emphasis on military solutions rather than diplomatic solutions to problems in the African continent, the State Department was quick to correct that misperception.⁶⁷ Regional economic and political endeavors will be aimed at promotion of "positive change in the continent through a whole series of diplomatic and humanitarian mechanisms as well as through efforts with the United Nations and the broader international community."⁶⁸

Keeping in mind the full spectrum of the TSCTI program, let's assess where it's hitting a bulls-eye, and where it might need a little help.

The military components of the TSCTI are solid, but there needs to be more investment in the other elements of national power, especially the Economic element. The U.S. needs to dig deep into its pockets, and convince the global community to do likewise, to support long-term programs to reduce poverty and social alienation. Although the TSCTI is touted as an interagency program, the majority of its "face" is military. The interagency partnerships and dovetailing programs are insufficiently tied to TSCTI, and the Information element of national power – both the Information Operations and Public Diplomacy, depending on whether the target audience is the bad guys or the good guys (the people of Africa; the taxpayers and elected officials at home in the U.S.) – needs to be leveraged more often and more effectively. This is how we win hearts, minds and future resources. A program without funding is a fantasy.

A successful U.S. strategy for countering radical Islamists must incorporate a "sophisticated strategic communications strategy to challenge Islamist assertions about

ideology, Islam, and U.S. policies.”⁶⁹ Currently, the U.S. falls short of the mark, at home and abroad, particularly in the exploitation of the Internet as a vehicle of message delivery. EUCOM's Public Affairs team does an excellent job of gaining and promoting coverage of its programs. One look at the EUCOM home page, which has an extensive collection of press releases, public statements by senior leaders of the organization, and even video clips from major media sources, tells the story of a dynamic command, engaged in many different directions – literally as well as figuratively – but somehow it all comes together in coherent support of the EUCOM theater security cooperation plan. The State Department and USAID also have positive, useful information on their websites, but the key here is that they do not differentiate between work related to the TSCTI and work being done in conjunction with other programs.

One of the biggest challenges to balancing out the interagency piece of this program and the many other programs in Africa (mentioned and not) is that the interagency, as an amorphous entity, is just too small. Department of Defense is incomparably larger, employee-wise and budget-wise, than any of the agencies it is partnering with under TSCTI: Department of State, USAID, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, and the Treasury Department.⁷⁰ Not only are the other agencies far smaller in personnel, but placing those personnel into positions in Africa has its own set of challenges. The criticism is often heard that “in foreign affairs, we rely too much on military might, allowing the velvet glove of diplomacy and information to wither in comparison, thereby weakening the world’s understanding of what we stand for, and breeding misperceptions that lead to hostility.”⁷¹

What isn’t discussed often enough is that frequently the reason behind over-reliance on the military element of national power is due to the military having people available to do the job, willing and required to deploy to austere environments if needed for the job, and the money to not only pay the personnel, but to buy the equipment for the supported partner nation. If we could quintuple the size of the Department of State, that might be a good starting point. Until then, we should continue to strive to task the “right” missions to the “right” agencies, but be willing to accept the fact that the military will bear the brunt of these types of programs, due to sheer numbers. Our recently-learned (or re-learned) lessons in Iraq and Afghanistan have pointed out some professional development shortfalls for both our uniformed and nonuniformed agents of the U.S. government. The quest for the Pentathlete Professional means that

...we must develop a new class of statesmen, civilian and military, to be holistic thinkers, capable of managing the integration of the many implements in the toolbox of American power – diplomacy, economics, law-enforcement,

intelligence, information, as well as the military. They should have a deep understanding of modern conflict in all its manifestations, from narcotics and international crime, to terrorism, insurgency, ethnic and civil wars, conventional war, as well as the ecological basis of national security.⁷²

The rucksack gets heavier, never lighter, and we simply must find the ways to make this development possible for professionals throughout the national elements of power.

The American “military face” could use a little help from our European allies, particularly in light of the fact that they own the lion’s share of the African continent’s scar tissue from the days of colonial rule. Further, the bad actors that this program seeks to neutralize, whether rendering them unable to operate or outright killing them, are actors who then will not export terror to Europe – so it isn’t just the U.S. that benefits. Participating in a coalition up front is likely to be better and cheaper than participating in a coalition for reconstruction and stability operations later on. The U.S. cannot do everything that needs doing in this world, and in today’s globalized economy and society, withdrawal from the world is not an option – for any country. Our diplomats need to continue to cultivate the ‘coalition of the willing’ at every opportunity.

Ambassador Shinn rightfully claimed that the U.S. needs to bolster its skills in the languages and cultures of the region. Speaking from his personal experience borne from 16 years as a Foreign Service Officer, he stated that “the U.S has allowed its language and area expertise among foreign affairs personnel to degrade to dangerous levels.”⁷³ He has issued a challenge to the U.S. to rebuild this expertise within the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, USAID, and the military. “Only then will the U.S. be able to engage in reliable information-gathering and increase the public affairs outreach to communities where Islamic fundamentalism and sympathy for terrorists are taking hold.”⁷⁴

Overall, the TSCTI is a tremendously ambitious, productive program, with good people working in all facets of the operation. It could be made better by throwing some meaningful weight, in the form of Congressional authorizations, onto the Interagency side of the equation. The true report card will only be seen with time, and through the filter of context of all the other dynamics at work in the Pan-Sahel and Maghreb regions of Africa. So far, halfway through the planned lifespan of this program, the TSCTI appears to be a winner, but in typical American “just can’t be satisfied” fashion, the gauntlet is thrown in challenge to make this program – and life for the citizens of our partners in Africa – just a little better.

As General Jones testified in 2006,

Properly implemented within a synchronized, flexible Interagency campaign, these security cooperation efforts can help produce well-trained and highly disciplined allied and partner forces that will reduce the conditions that lead to conflict, prepare the way for warfighting success, and ultimately ease the burden

on US forces...These efforts support the long-term strategic objectives of the Global War on Terrorism by building understanding and consensus on the terrorist threat, laying foundations for future 'coalitions of the willing,' and extending our country's security perimeter.⁷⁵

Endnotes

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